

THE STATE OF OUR TRAILS

Prepared by FS for the Dec. 21, 2012 Trail Planning Meeting

- Discussion is Red Rock area specific
- Location, type, mileage, use
- Costs
- Demographics of users
- Trail Conditions
- Trail Use Trends



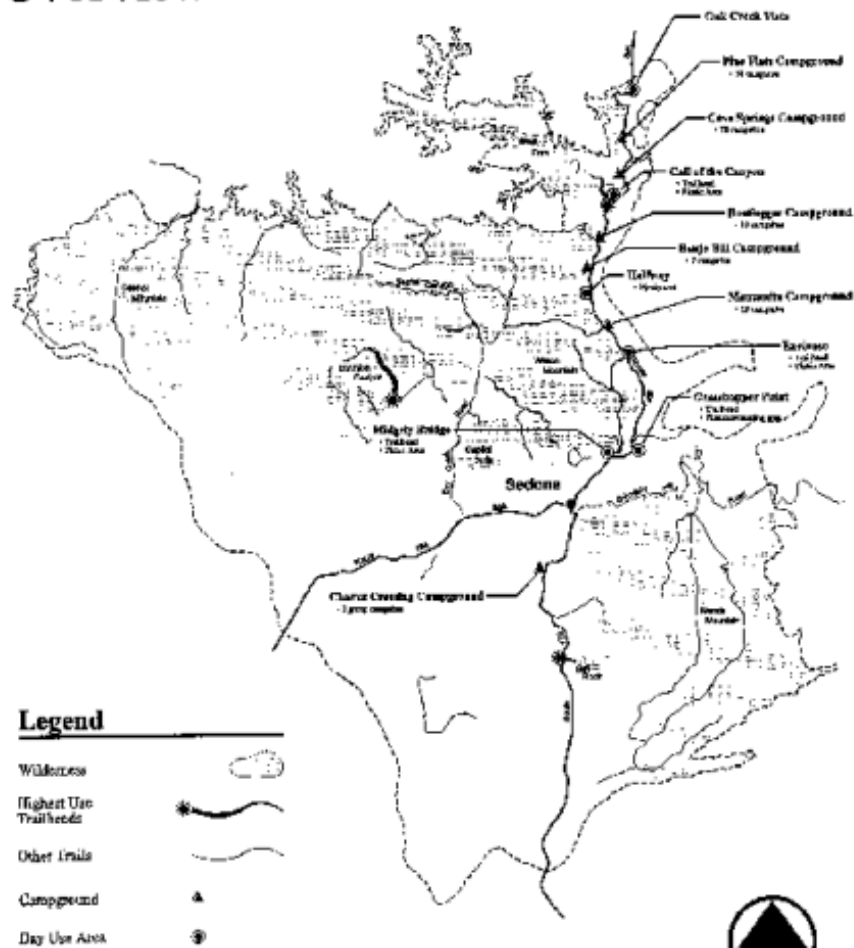
What is an “official system” trail?

It is a trail that -

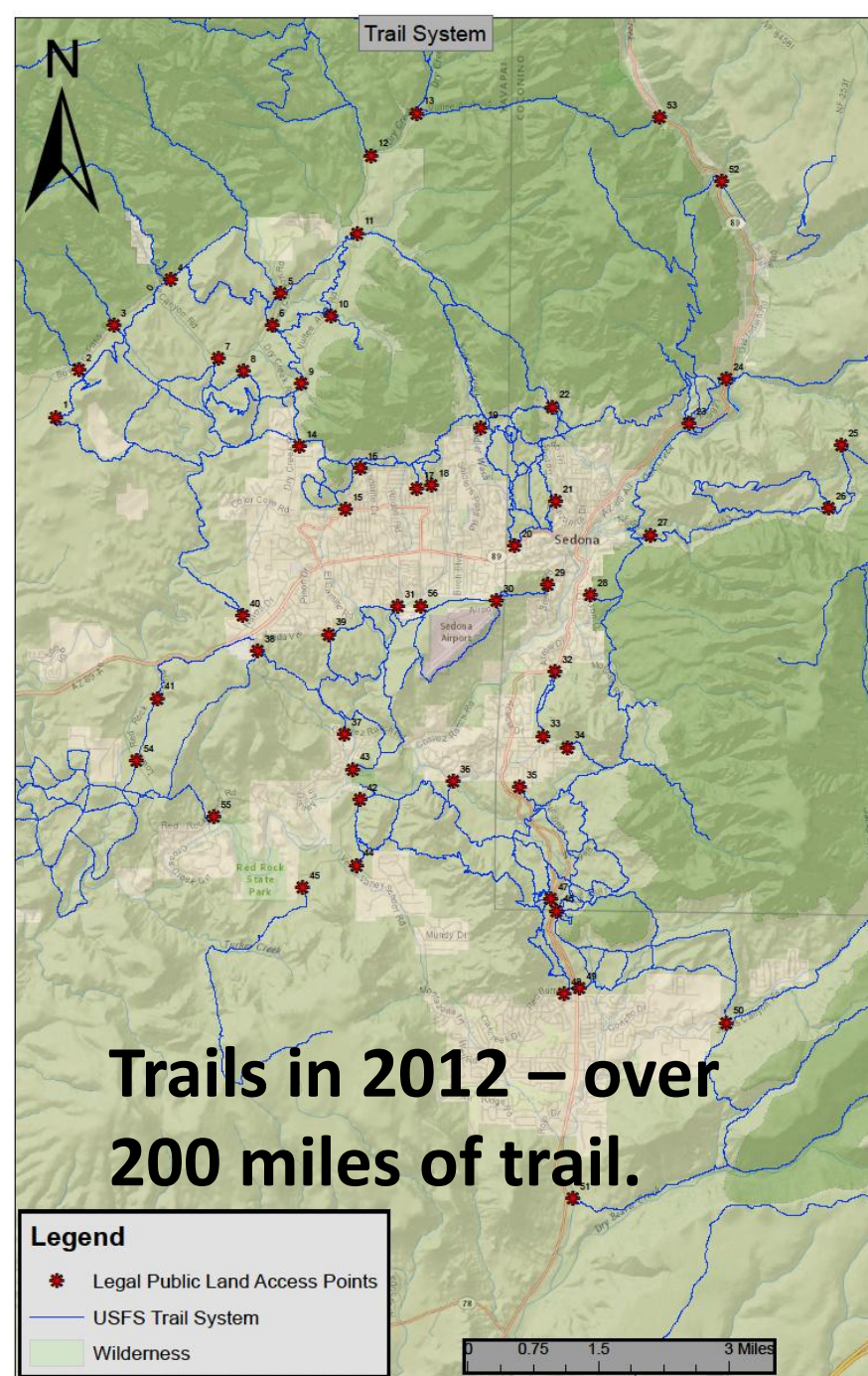
- Has environmental studies complete.
- The public has commented on.
- The Forest Service has completed an official decision (NEPA).
- The trail is compatible with “Forest Plan”.
- Only “system” trails can be signed and maintained.

Recreation Use Overview

Sedona • Oak Creek Canyon
Ecosystem Management Plan
Coconino National Forest • Sedona Ranger District



Trails in 1998 – very few miles of trail.



Trails in 2012 – over 200 miles of trail.

- Today we have more than 227 miles of “system” trail near Sedona and VOC.
- 150 miles are located outside of Wilderness areas.
- 77 miles are within Wilderness areas.

- Most FS trails open to all non-motorized users.
- Most trail use in the Red Rock area is hiking.
- 55 legal trail access points exist for access to FS trails.

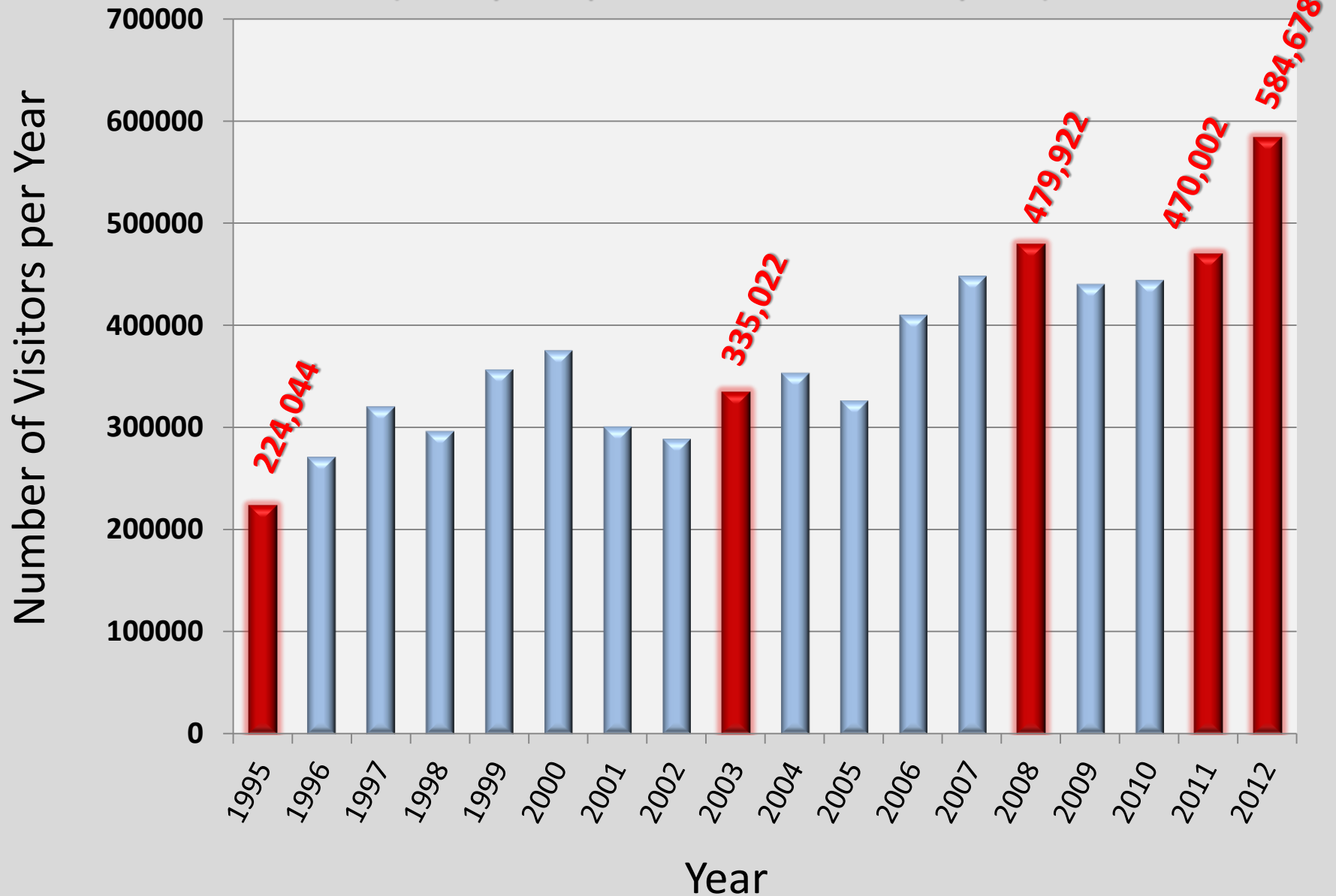
Who uses the trails, where and how many?



There are a wide diversity of users from many states and countries with varied abilities and knowledge.



Trail Use Data by Year for the Sedona/VOC Area (Nearly 300 percent increase in 17 years)

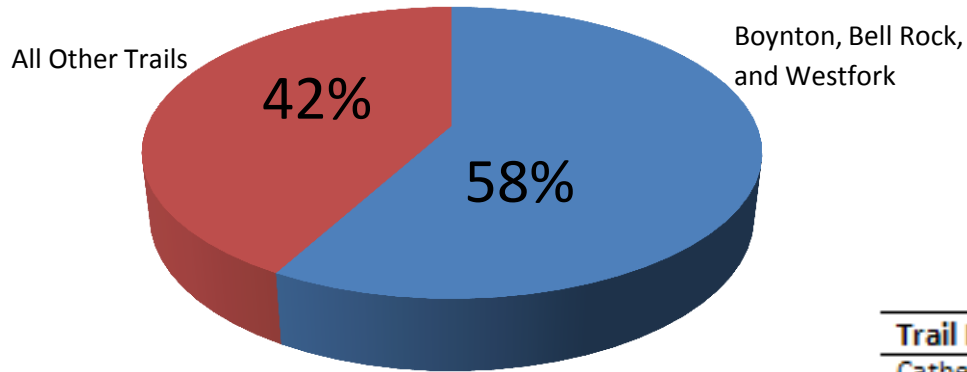


Ever growing trail use

- 300 percent increase: 1995 – 2013
- Nearly 600,000 users now.
- Sixty percent (60%) of use is on 4 popular trails
- Trail data is collected by volunteers who have maintained trail use registration (sign-in) boxes for the past 17 years.
- This is likely an “undercount” due to the fact that many trail users do not sign in at the boxes.

Most Popular Trails (1995)

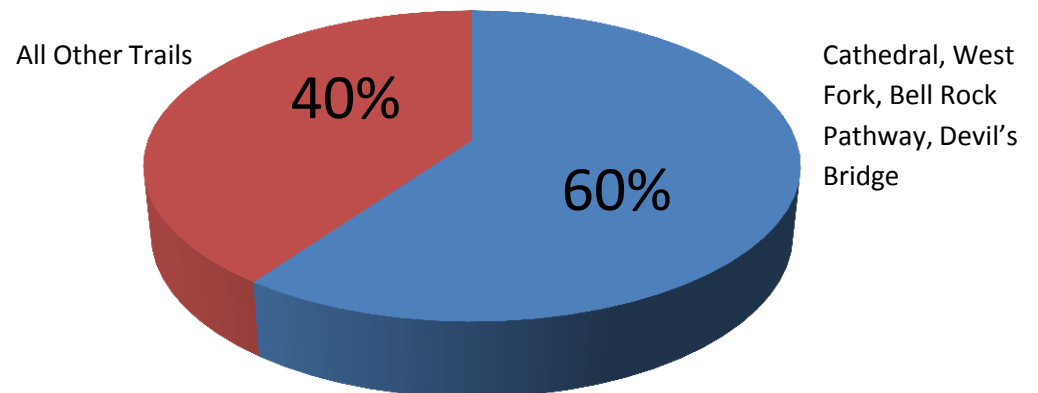
Trail Name	Number of Users
Boynton, Bell Rock, West Fork	129,993
All Other Trails	94,051
Total Trail Use	224,044



Over half of trail use is on the most popular trails: Cathedral, Bell Rock Pathway, West Fork, and Devil's Bridge.

Most Popular Trails (2012)


Trail Name	Number of Users
Cathedral, West Fork, Bell Rock Pathway, Devil's Bridge	350,841
All Other Trails	234,737
Total Trail Use	584,678



Who uses the trails - demographics?



- Only 10% of trail use is by local residents
- Most trail users are from out of state
- Most trail users here are older than US average
- More educated and wealthier than US average
- Two thirds are first time visitors and are uninformed and many are unprepared



SOPHIA WITTE, right, lights luminaries Saturday, Dec. 8, during the annual Festival of Lights celebration at the Tlaquepaque Arts and Crafts Village. For nearly 40 years people have joined together for the festival to light thousands of

luminaries throughout the village and enjoy live music. The luminaries are adorned with messages remembering those who have died from cancer and for those who have beaten the disease.

Tom Hood/Courier Newspapers

when the appeal is filed. Dispensary licenses should be aware that Judge Gordon's decision is subject to appeal and could be overturned."

The court case concerns efforts by Maricopa County to

»see POT | 10A

■ Patients, and of course marijuana, without any other known dispensable marijuana to patients.

4 agencies rescue 2 local hikers

By Patrick Whitchurst
Courier Newspapers

Four emergency response agencies responded to a report of two stranded hikers near Sedona on Dec. 5.

The hikers, a 25-year-old man from Cottonwood and a 20-year-old Sedona woman, were rescued near Volstro Arch in

Oak Creek Canyon. The seven-hour rescue operation involved 20 rescue and medical personnel.

According to a Thursday, Dec. 6, press release from the Coconino County Sheriff's Office, the two were balanced on an outcropping less than 2 square feet when they became stranded. A deputy on scene reported the hikers were stuck on a small, rocky outcropping approximately 30 feet below the top of

the canyon and approximately 50 feet above the floor.

The male hiker used his cell phone to call for assistance shortly after 4:10 p.m., according to the release. Responding agencies included the Sedona Fire District, Coconino County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue, CCSO and the Arizona Department of Public

»see HIKERS | 10A

"The call occurred in the Slide area near Sterling Pass Trail, trapped on a ledge. They could but they couldn't go down."

Gary Johnson

Sedona Fire District Fire Marshal and Public Info

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Numerous search and rescues and injuries occur each year.

On average one per week, 70% are non-residents.

What is the condition of our trails?



Extreme erosion occurs on many of our steep trails.



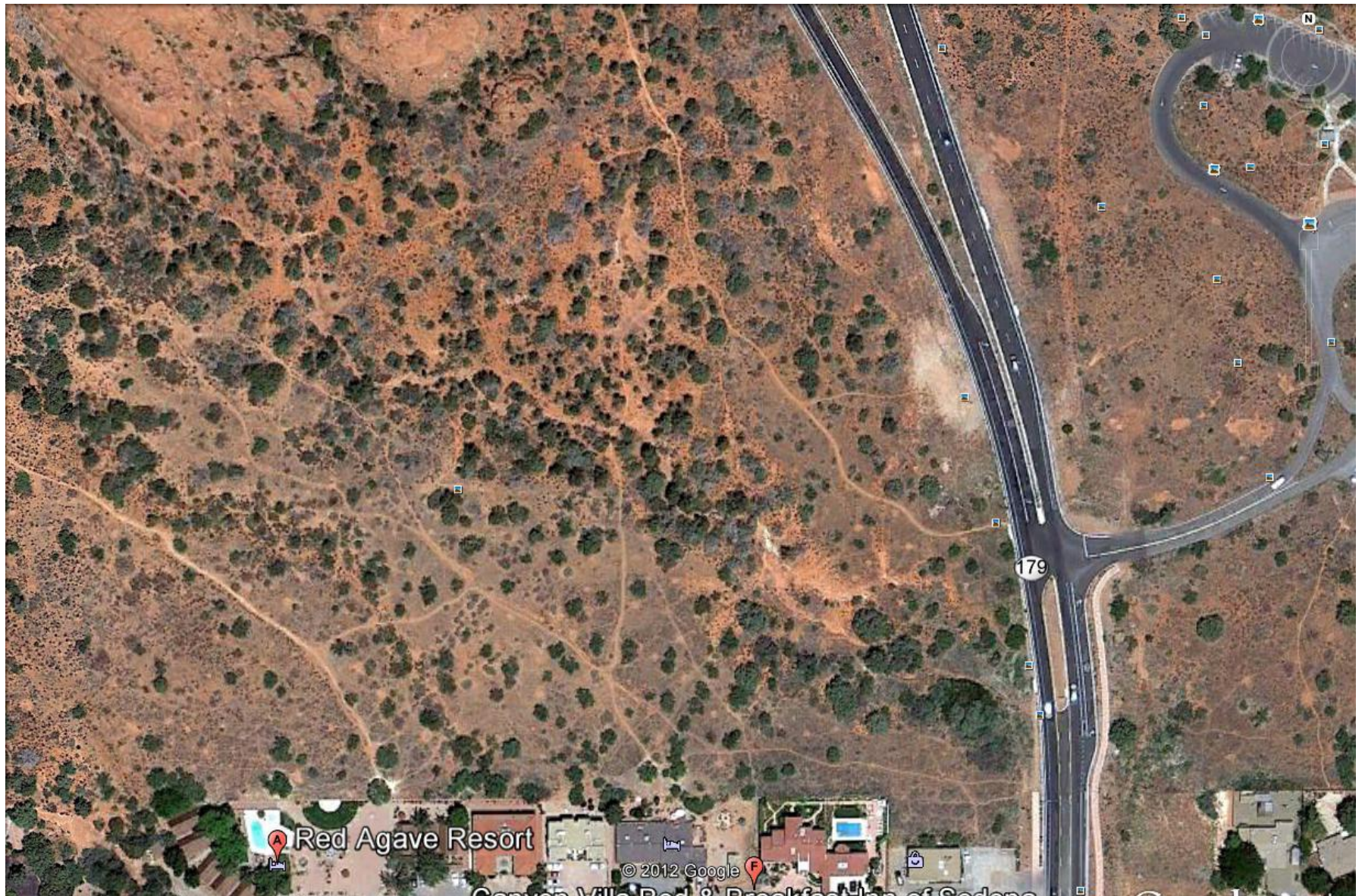
If reroutes are not possible then expensive rock armoring is often done to protect the trail tread.



Trails too steep to be sustainable. Tread washes and blows away.



Rock armoring on steep sections is more common now because it keeps tread from eroding and can be negotiated by all users.



Proliferation of “user created” trails close to residential areas is a huge impact to the health of the watershed.

Summary of Forest Service concerns

- **Lack of funds for trail planning, maintenance and construction threatens the future of the trail system.**
- **Protection of Oak Creek water quality and other resources affects decisions related to location and amount of public trails.**
- **Quality of visitor and resident trail experience will depend on community support.**
- **Compatibility with Forest Plan is a legal mandate.**

Forest Service Trails Budget

2013 Red Rock District funding is \$280,000 total for Rivers, Trails and Wilderness Program broken down as follows:

- **Wild and Scenic River program (Verde River and Fossil Creek)- --\$140,000**
- **Red Rock Adopt a trail program coordinator - -----\$60,000**
- **Other personnel, planning, training, vehicles and supplies - -\$80,000**

The District manages the only 2 Wild and Scenic Rivers in the State...which competes with funding for trails. The City of Sedona contributes annually \$30,000 to fund the Adopt-a-Trail program (partnering with FS). The “trail” staffing at the District consists of one trail supervisor (A. Francisca), one trail technician (the adopt a trail leader) and lots of volunteers. There is no permanent “trail crew” at this time.

Who cares for our trails?

Friends of the Forest installing warning sign at Hot Loop Trail.



Sedona Westerners have donated many trail signs over the years.



Contract trail crews are sometimes used when funding allows.



**Volunteer events and work days – IMBA
2009 work on Pigtail Trail.**

Graffiti removal by volunteers has removed a LOT of bad graffiti over the years.



Clearing dead-fall each year is a big job!



Adopt-A-Trail Program will expand volunteer trail care efforts. This program focuses on getting residents involved.

Volunteers needed to maintain trails

On Nov. 27 and 28, the Coconino National Forest Red Rock Ranger District introduced a new program for maintaining our trails within the Red Rock District. Sounds simple, yes? Well this concept of adopting a trail is happening all over the country, but this group of volunteers were the first in this area to pioneer the program. The U.S. Forest Service does not have the manpower or the funds to accomplish this on their own, so volunteers are one way to increase the much needed attention to preserve our trails and to do so under the proper guidance.

Five members of the Sedona Westerners and a local mountain bike enthusiast, along with a few local residents, selected a trail and committed to volunteer their services four times a year. Everyone came together to align themselves in preserving what they love and to care for the land so others can continue to enjoy access to the national forest. Andy Wheeler, a long time Westerners member and liaison for the Forest Service, led the challenge for the Westerners



Photo courtesy of Les Feshing
THE "WORKING" CREW poses for a picture before heading onto the trail. Four members of the Sedona Westerners and a local mountain bike enthusiast, along with a few local residents, selected a trail and committed to volunteer their services four times a year.

the trail. All of these things can pose a danger to hikers, bikers and equestrians as the trails become more from routine.

trail was designed for mountain bikes, horse traffic, hikers or any combination of the three. That afternoon, one day a week

everyone began scheduling their first outing on their respective trail, each volunteer felt proud to be a part of the trail care



Volunteer trail patrols include mountain bike and foot patrols to assist visitors with safety and orientation.

Summary of trail use information:

- Incredibly **high use** trail system
- Extremely well **marketed** trail system
- Lots of trail users **unprepared**
- Critical need for **signage** and **orientation**
- Residents are **passionate** about trails
- Overwhelming **backlog** of trail maintenance
- Visitor rescues are a **strain** on local agencies
- Growing **local interest** to help care for trails
- Not enough **financial resources** for trails

What's next to learn????

Red Rocks - The ecosystem!

Red Rocks – The Forest Plan!

